



USAID
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ILLEGAL GOLD MINING

Illegal gold mining is the most lucrative illicit activity in Peru, surpassing coca and cocaine production in recent years. Illegal gold mining involves destructive processes that are devastating Peru's Amazon communities and environment. USAID works with local communities, Peruvian research organizations, and U.S. universities to help address this critical threat to the Amazon.

Over the last decade, Peru's fast growing economy was fueled by high prices in the mining, oil, and gas sectors. As gold prices climbed, illegal alluvial gold mining expanded into Madre de Dios, a region located in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon. Over 60,000 hectares of land in Madre de Dios has been destroyed, and the health of communities living in the region is endangered due to the unregulated use of mercury. Furthermore, the explosive growth of illegal mining is linked other criminal activities including transnational organized crime, child labor, human trafficking and land grabbing. USAID works with affected communities to address social conflicts and rehabilitate affected land.

OUR WORK

MITIGATING SOCIAL CONFLICTS

Social conflicts are often created when illegal miners, who frequently migrate from other regions, come into contact with local farmers and indigenous communities. USAID works with local leadership to

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improve the management of natural resources, provide conflict resolution skills, and offer information about establishing legal mining operations. In 2016, USAID trained 600 people in conflict resolution. USAID also supports indigenous communities such as those in the Amaraeri Reserve to strengthen their ability to address social and environmental conflicts as they arise.

RESTORING COMMUNITIES

Illegal gold mining decimates land, leaving behind barren landscapes polluted by mercury. Through a USAID-led partnership with Wake Forest University, the National Amazonian University of Madre de Dios, and the *Instituto de Investigación de la Amazonia Peruana*, affected areas will be analyzed to identify and mitigate mercury contamination, assess alternative landscape uses, and monitor and report new forest encroachment.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

The victims of illegal gold mining include women and girls, and to lesser extent boys, who are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking in mining camps. USAID supports research, policy, and advocacy efforts to inform and strengthen the Government of Peru's program to fight Trafficking in Persons (TIP). Across the Amazon Basin, USAID has convened interregional conferences to raise awareness about TIP, trained more than 250 TIP care providers, and provided legal and psychological support to 50 victims.

RAISING AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENING SCIENTIFIC CAPACITY

USAID partners with local and international organizations to support environmental education and raise awareness about the impacts of illegal gold mining in the Amazon. USAID is helping strengthen scientific capacity to analyze the impacts of illegal gold mining in the environment by supporting the establishment of the first Mercury and Analytical Chemistry Analysis Laboratory, using drones for the analysis of deforestation and reforestation activities, and providing research opportunities for your researchers in Madre de Dios.

COMBATING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

Illegal mining threatens protected areas and indigenous lands. USAID intends to launch a new initiative to reduce threats to biodiversity in the Peruvian Amazon by strengthening Peru's ability to effectively address and prevent environmental crimes, in particular illegal mining and illegal logging in protected areas and their buffer zones, indigenous lands, and other relevant forest management units in the Amazon. Work under this activity will contribute to national and regional level efforts to combat these crimes.

CONTACTS

MISSION

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